

Technical Attachment

A Guide to Organizing a Local Aviation Weather Workshop

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This technical attachment is for WFO aviation focal points who may be interested in organizing and hosting a local aviation workshop. The Houston/Galveston Forecast Office (HGX) successfully sponsored an aviation workshop late last year. We believe it helped our forecasters develop a better sense of understanding of who our aviation customers are, what their needs are, and how they use our products. Due to the success of the workshop, we are looking forward to having the next one this fall.

HGX is in a relatively close proximity to the Space Meteorology Group (SMG) of NASA, the FAA's Flight Service Station (FSS) in Conroe, and the Center Weather Service Unit (CWSU) near Bush Intercontinental Airport. Our staff has the advantage of having access to the aviation weather experience of meteorologists and flight weather briefers from the aforementioned facilities.

This guide for organizing an aviation workshop may not be feasible for some WFOs. However, at the very least, it should provide the aviation focal point with a starting point and at the same time, some proven ideas on how to organize and conduct an aviation workshop.

Once the decision is made to organize a workshop, allow yourself several months of lead time. Coordinate with your local CWSU and FSS. Tell them what you intend to accomplish with your workshop. It should be a win-win situation for the WFO, CWSU and FSS.

CWSU meteorologists can provide several important items for your agenda. A staff member from their unit can discuss their interaction with air traffic control personnel. An Air Traffic Management Unit (TMU) staff member may be able to provide a presentation about the National Airspace System (NAS), and how adverse weather can impact the system. In our case, Vince Carreras (MIC of CWSU IAH) recruited a top level manager from TMU and this person provided an excellent presentation.

Do not forget your local FSS. The training officer and quality control officer of the Flight Service Station at Conroe were more than willing to attend our workshop and share ideas. As a side note, we were made aware that flight weather briefers read the Area Forecast Discussions of surrounding WFOs. It helps them understand the unfolding weather scenario during their watch.

Contact general aviation flying clubs in your CWFA. More than likely, they use your Web site on a regular basis. The Bay Area Aero Club based at Clover Field in Pearland, Texas participated in our workshop. The officers of this club were very eager to provide a presentation and interact with our meteorologists. They showed us how they use NWS aviation products and services.

If you are near a commercial aviation hub, you may be able to get an airliner dispatcher. They can participate in your workshop, provide insight on how they use our TAFs, and provide beneficial suggestions.

Spaceflight Meteorology Group meteorologist Tim Garner provided a presentation for our workshop. It was about forecasting landing weather conditions for the space shuttle. He showed the HGX staff their method of micro-scale forecasting which includes the use of a plethora of meteorological sensors near the landing site. For WFOs within half a day driving distance of Johnson Space Center, consider inviting an SMG meteorologist for your seminar.

As stated previously, the HGX workshop's focus was on enhancing the awareness of our forecasters with regard to aviation users. For our next workshop, we would like to add a presentation for our users. It will be about our aviation forecasting methodology. The goal is to provide an increased level of understanding on how and why a forecaster may construct a TAF a certain way.